

BACKGROUND: EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

The Hmong language uses many kinds of expressive language: short, rhyming expressions that teach (like proverbs); expressions taken from ritual texts and songs; paired words or four-word expressions which are used like single words; comparisons (similar to our similes and metaphors); and old words—words from the grandfather's day or borrowed from Chinese—that many Hmong today can't really translate.

Since Hmong has only recently become a written language, description of the language has not really been done yet. Categorization and labeling of types of language structures varies from group to group, and in some cases, there is no vocabulary for a structure that has no comparable English structure.

PROVERBS AND FLOWER WORDS

Generally, proverbs are of two kinds: literal or direct, and figurative or indirect. The literal proverbs are called *piv-txoj-lus* ('compare-way-word'). They contain rhyming words and are used frequently in day-to-day conversation. The meaning is fairly direct and obvious, especially to Hmong; those that outsiders have difficulty in understanding are ones that refer to a part of Hmong life that is unfamiliar to Westerners. Examples of *piv-txoj-lus* are:

Pos ntse tsis yuav hliav;
Neeg ntse tsis yuav piav.

thorn-sharp-not-will-sharpen
person-sharp-not-will-explain

**You don't have to sharpen a thorn;
You don't have to explain to a smart person.**

Nyob deb txog dej txog **cawv**;
Nyob ze cuag hluav-taws **hlawv**.

live-far-arrive-water-arrive-whiskey
live-close-equal-firewood-ignite

Living far apart serve water and whiskey;
Living close is like firewood catching fire.

The indirect, figurative proverbs are called 'flower words' (*paj-lus*). In flower words, the meaning is symbolic and fairly obscure; you have to know something of Hmong culture, beliefs, and rituals in order to understand the deeper meaning. Flower words do not contain rhyming words, and are not known by many people. Someone who knows the flower words is knowledgeable in the customs and rituals of the culture. Examples of flower words are:

Ntov ntoo saib ceg qhuav.

chop-tree-watch-branch-dry

When you chop a tree, look out for dry branches.
(Before you speak, look around for who is listening.)

Koj qaib pw kuv cooj
Kuv os pw koj nkuaj.

your-chicken-sleep-my-chicken coop
my-duck-sleep-your-stable

Your chicken sleeps in my coop
My duck sleeps in your stable.

(Your family gives my family a daughter-in-law;
My family gives your family a daughter-in-law.)

Tsis pom dej dag, siab tsis nqig.

not-see-water-yellow, heart-not-recede/wane

If you don't see the yellow water, your heart does not wane.

(If you have not actually experienced the difficulty, you cannot speak about it.)

PAIRED WORDS

Paired words are called *txwv-lus* ('pair-word'). Examples of these are:

kub tes kub taw
hot-hand-hot-foot

**busy doing many things at
once**

kev ntsoj kev ntsuag
way-orphan-way-orphan

orphanhood

cua daj cua dub
wind-yellow-wind-black

storm

Paired words are used like multi-syllable words; they are nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs. Word pairs can change form by changing the classifier (the word that makes another word specific):

kev ntsoj kev ntsuag

orphanhood
(*'kev'*=*'way'* or *'path'*)

tub ntsoj tub ntsuag

orphan
(*'tub'*=*'person'*)

ua ntsoj ua ntsuag

to be an orphan
(*'ua'*=*'do'*)

In addition, the parts of the expression can be used independently, as:

kev ntsuag
tub ntsuag
ua ntsuag

Often it is these expressions that are manipulated in the sung poetry. Many of the expressions come from the shaman's ritual texts, and the individual elements' meanings have been lost, or cannot be directly defined.

SIMILES

Comparisons are used in everyday speech, as in English. They usually contain these words:

cuag	(equal; reach to)
npaum li	(as much as)
zoo li	(like)
xws li	(as)
li	(as)

Examples are:

tawv cuag zeb <i>hard-equal-rock</i>	as hard as rock
nrawm npaum li kauv <i>fast-as much as-deer</i>	as fast as a deer
qeeb li vaub-kib <i>slow-as-turtle</i>	as slow as a turtle

There are other kinds of comparisons, comparable to English metaphors, as:

qiv kauv txhais (**borrow the legs of a deer**) = fast

PROVERBS

PIV-TXOJ-LUS ***PAJ LUS***

1. Muaj tsis txhob khav
Pluag tsis txhob quaj.

have-don't-boast
poor-don't-cry

Rich, don't boast,
Poor, don't cry.

2. Cog ib tau kaum.

plant-one-get-ten

Plant one, reap ten.

3. Ntau txhais tes ua hauj-lwm sib
Ntau lub tswv-yim ua tau txoj kev qhib.

many-hand-make-work-light
many-idea-make-way-open

Many hands make light work;
Many ideas open the way.

4. Cuaj lub cub tawg sov tsis cuag ib lub hnuv
Cuaj leej ntshais zoo tsis cuag ib leeg tub.

nine-fireplaces-warm-not-equal-one-sun
nine-daughters-good-not-equal-one-son

**Nine fireplaces are not as warm as the sun;
Nine daughters do not equal one son.**

5. Niam dev tsis co tw
Txiv dev tsis raws.

*Female-dog-not-shake-tail
Male-dog-not-follow*

**If the female dog doesn't wag her tail,
The male dog doesn't follow.**

6. Nyob deb muab dej muab cawv
Nyob ze cuag hluav-taws hlavv.

*live-far-give-water-give-whiskey
live-close-equal-firewood-ignite*

**Live far apart, give water and whiskey;
Live close together, like firewood catching fire.**

7. Nyob deb sib hlub
Nyob ze sib ntxub

*live-far-each other-love
live-near-each other-hate*

**Live far way, love each other
Live close together, hate each other.**

8. Npua ua rau dev noj.

pig-do-for-dog-eat

Pigs do, and dogs eat.

9. Mov-kuam qab tsis cuag mov nplej
Cov tom-qab zoo tsis cuag tus ua-ntej.

cornmeal mush-delicious-not equal-cooked rice
those-after-good-not equal-one-before

**Cornmeal mush is not as delicious as cooked rice;
Those who come after are not as good as the one who came before.**

10. Zoo nraug thiaj tau nkauj sua
Siab ntev thiaj tau nom ua.

handsome-then-get-girl-Chinese
heart-long-then-get-chief-do

**Handsome, then get the Chinese girl;
Patient, then become chief.**

11. Tsis yog luag nom luag tswv, luag yeej tsis xav hawm
Tsis yog luag kwv luag tij, luag yeej tsis xav cawm.

not-be-their-chief-their-master, they-always-not-wish-respect
not-be-their-young brother-their-old brother, they-always-not-wish-support.

**If you are not their chief, they do not respect you;
If you are not their clan-mate, they do not support you.**

12. Tsuas muaj tus ntses lawv tus dej
Tsis muaj tus dej lawv tus ntses.

only-have-fish-follow-river
not-have-river-follow-fish

**There are only fish that follow the river;
There are no rivers that follow the fish.**

13. Taum lag taum lig ua quav ntsooj
Tub lag tub lig ua luag puab rooj
Taum lag taum lig ua quav nas
Tub lag tub lig ua luag puab ntsa.

bean-late-bean-late-make-feces-porcupine
son-late-son-late-do-others-wait-door
bean-late-bean-late-make-feces-rat
son-late-son-late-do-others-wait-wall

**Plant beans late, they are marked with spots;
Man who works slowly begs at the others' door.
Plant beans late, they are marked with blight;
Man works who works little begs at the others' fence.**

14. Pom tsov yuav tuag
Pom nom yuav pluag.

see-tiger-will-die
see-official-will-be poor

**See a tiger, you will die;
See an official, you will be poor.**

15. Yam zoo ntshai tsam tau me
Yam phem ntshai tsam los ze.

thing-good-fear-get-little
thing-bad-fear-come-near

**Something good, you're afraid you'll get too little;
Something bad, you're afraid it'll come too near.**

16. Hla dej yuav hle khau
Tsiv-teb-tsaws-chaw yuav hle hau

cross-river-will-take off-shoe
flee-country-leave-place-will-take off-status

**Cross the river, you'll take off your shoes;
Flee from your country, you'll lose your status.**

17. Ntuj dub ntuj txig li lub qhov kub twg
Xyov yus yuav tuag hnuv twg.

sky-black-sky-black-as-opening-oven-any
don't know-one-will-die-day-which

**Fortune is black, like any oven door;
No one can know on which day one will die.**

18. Thaum zoo mas nthee ib lub qe ob leeg twb noj tsis tas
Thaum phem mas tua ib tug ntshw twb tsis txaus ob leeg noj.

when-good-then-scramble-one-egg-two-people-already-not-finish
when-bad-then-kill-one-elephant-already-not-enough-2-people-eat

**When times are good, one scrambled egg is more than two people
can finish;
When times are bad, butchering one elephant is not enough for two
people to eat.**

19. Nceb yuav tuaj tsis tim los nag heev
Neeg yuav muaj tsis tim ua cuav-teev.

mushroom-will-sprout-not-necessary-come-rain-much
people-will-have-not-necessary-do-cheat-balance scale

**Mushrooms will sprout, it's not necessary to have a lot of rain;
People will be rich, it's not necessary to fix the scale.**

20. Zom zeb mob tes
Tuav cos mob taw
Ris dej mob nraub-qaum
Noj mov nkaus diav maum.

grind-stone-hurt-hand
pound-rice pounder-hurt-foot
carry-water-hurt-back
eat-rice-get-big-spoon

"Grinding corn hurts my hand!"
"Pounding rice hurts my foot!"
"Carrying water hurts my back!"
But for eating rice, you get a big spoon.

21. Dig-muag pom kev nruab qaig-hli
Lag-ntseg hnov lus ntshi
Dig-muag pom kev yam hmo-ntuj
Lag-ntseg hnov kes tawv nyuj.

blind-eye-see-way-quarter-moon-light
deaf-ear-hear-word-smile
blind-eye-see-way-thing-night-sky
deaf-ear-hear-scratch-skin-cow

The blind can see the road in the dim moonlight;
The deaf can hear a whisper;
The blind can see things in the road at night;
The deaf can hear something scratching the skin of a cow.

22. Tshav-ntuj qab zeb qab ca qhuav
Los-nag qab zeb qab ca ntub.

sunshine-under-rock-under-fallen log-dry
come-rain-under-rock-under-fallen log-wet

**When it's sunny, under the rock and log, it's dry;
When it's rainy, under the rock and log, it's wet.**

23. Nyuj tsis pom nyuj ntab
Neeg tsis pom hiab-xab.

*cow-not-see-cow's-skin under the chin
person-not-see-face*

**A cow cannot see the skin under his chin;
A person cannot see his own face.**

24. Txawj ntos tsis qeg txia
Txawj hais tsis qeg lus.

*able-weave-not-waste-thread ('woof' or cross-threads)
able-speak-not-waste-words*

**Able to weave, don't waste thread;
Able to speak, don't waste words.**

25. Ncauj hub ncauj rhawv txhaws tau
Ncauj tib-neeg txhaws tsis tau.

*mouth-jar-mouth-barrel/pipe-plug-can
mouth-person-plug-not-can*

**The mouth of a jar or a barrel can be plugged;
The mouth of a person cannot be plugged.**

26. Saib dej ua ntu
Saib neeg ua plhu

*watch-river-one-section (at a time)
watch-person-make-cheek (face)*

**Examine each stretch of the stream;
Supervise people without favoritism.**

27. Ua nom mas tsis zam cai
Ua cai tsis zam neeg
Zam neeg mas swb cai
Zam cai mas swb neeg.

do-official-then-not-go around-law
do-law-not-go around-people
go around-people-then-be defeated by-law
go around-law-then-be defeated by-people

**When you're leader, don't manipulate the law;
When you apply the law, don't manipulate people;
When you manipulate people, you're defeated by the law;
When you manipulate the law, you're defeated by people.**

28. Twv txiaj tau kev pluag
Twv ntuj tau kev tuag
Twv zoo tau kev phem
Twv ntuj tau kev txom-nyem

bet-money-get-way-poor
bet-sky-get-way-death
bet-good-get-way-bad
bet-sky-get-way-misery

**Gamble money, become poor;
Defy fortune, get death;
Gamble the good, get the bad;
Defy heaven, get misery.**

29. Txiv neej yawg ib los 30 tus hniav hais lus
Kav tsis taus 30 hhub, mas kav 28 hhub.

man-old-one-come-thirty-teeth-speak-word
control-not-able-thirty-day, then-control-twenty eight-day

**A man who is old enough to have 30 teeth speaks words
That last 30 days, if not, then 28 days.**

(An adult man does what he says he'll do.)

30. Hais txog kev lom-zem, ces xav luag.
Hais txog kev txom-nyem, ces xav tuag.

speak-about-way-enjoy, then-wish-laugh
speak-about-way-misery, then-wish-die

**Speak about enjoyment, you want happiness;
Speak about misery, you want to die.**

31. Noj tsis noj kuj tuav diav
Luag tsis luag kuj ntxi hniav

eat-not-eat-so then-hold-spoon
laugh-not-laugh-so then-smile

**Whether you eat or not, at least hold a spoon;
Whether you laugh or not, at least smile.**

32. Qoob lag qoob lig qoob npluag
Tub lag tub lig tub ntsuag.

crops-late-crops-late-crops-poor/spindly
child-late-child-late-child-orphan

**Crops planted late are poor crops;
Children born late are orphans.**

33. Tau yaam tshab txhob hnov-qaab yaam qub
Tau nam yau ncu ntsoov nam hlub.

get-thing-new-don't-forget-thing-old
get-wife-young-remember-well-wife-older

**Accept the new things, but don't forget the old things;
Take a new wife, but don't forget the first wife.**

34. Tsis ua luam ces txiv tub
Ua luam lawm ces suav dub.

not-do-trading-then-father-son
do-trading-already-then-Chinese-black

**When not doing business, be like father and son;
When doing business, be like the black Chinese.**

35. Xav luaj ntuj
Xu luaj nyuj

wish-big as-sky
miss target-big as-cow

**Aim for the sky;
Hit the cow.**

36. Ib ntuj hnub qub pom kev tsis cuag ib lub txhais hli
Cuaj leeg tub tsis cuag ib leeg txiv.

one-sky-stars-see-way-not equal-one-quarter-moon
nine-son-not equal-one-father

**A starry sky does not light your way as well as quarter-moon;
Nine sons do not equal one father.**

37. Niam tshuab ntuag, txiv qaiv ntxaiv
Niam mloog txiv qhuab, txiv mloog niam hais.

*wife-machine-weave, husband-hang thread on loom
wife-listen-husband-advise, husband-listen-wife-speak*

**The wife is the loom, the husband hangs the thread;
The wife listens to the husband's advice, the husband listens to the
wife's opinions.**

38. Nyuj ntsuag tsis tuag, nyuj ntsuag hlob tiav pwj
Tub ntsuag tsis tuag, tub ntsuag hlob cjaiv xeev txwj
Qaib ntsuag tsis tuag, qaib ntsuag hlob tiav lau
Tub ntsuag tsis tuag, tub ntsuag hlob cjaiv hau.

*cow-orphan-not-die-cow-orphan-grow up-ox
boy-orphan-not-die-boy-orphan-grow up-war lord
chicken-orphan-not-die-chicken-orphan-grow up-rooster
boy-orphan-not-die-boy-orphan-grow up-village chief*

**If an orphaned calf does not die, it may become an ox;
If an orphaned boy does not die, he may become a warlord;
If an orphaned chick does not die, it may become a rooster;
If an orphaned boy does not die, he may become a village chief.**

39. Tus qaib ntsuag tau ncej puab
Tus tub ntsuag tau yeeb-ncuab.

*[raise]-the-chicken-orphan-get-thigh
[raise]-the-boy-orphan-get-enemy*

**An orphaned chick, at least you get a thigh;
An orphaned boy, you may get an enemy.**

40. Pos ntse tsis yuav hliav
Neeg ntse tsis yuav piav

*thorn-sharp-not-need-sharpen
person-sharp-not-need-explain*

**No need to sharpen a thorn;
No need to explain to a smart person.**

41. Thaum luag tsaj, tsis nrog luag tsaj
Thaum luag saj, ces yus ua dev nuam yaj.

*when-others-work, (one) not-with-others-work
when-others-eat, then-one-do-dog-wait for scraps*

**When others work, I don't go to work with them;
When they eat, I act like a dog waiting for scraps.**

42. Pluag pluag ua plhu luag
Muaj muaj ua plhu quaj.

*poor-poor-make-cheek (face)-laugh
have-have-make-cheek (face)-cry*

**The poor laugh;
The rich cry.**

43. Rau-siab rau yam twg
Yeej yuav tau yam ntawd

*put heart-into-something
succeed-will-get-that thing*

**Put your heart into something;
You will succeed and get that thing.**

44. Thaum nyob ces ntsim cuag kua-txob;
Thaum ncaim lawd ho ua plhu mluas-mlob.

when-be together-then-hot-equal-chili pepper
when-separate-already-then-make-face-sad/down-turned mouth

**When you're together, it's hot like chili peppers;
When you're separated, your face is so sad.**

45. Plaub-hau ntshov thiaj yuav zuag los ntsis;
Plaub ntug ntshov thiaj yuav txwj laus los lis.

hair-tangled-then-will use-comb-to comb
dispute-complicated-then-will use-elder-solve

**Tangled hair, use a comb to unsharl it;
Complicated dispute, use an elder to solve it.**

46. Neeg nquag ua twj-ywm;
Neeg tub nkeeg xaiv hauj-lwm.

person-energetic-do-quietly
person-one-lazy-choose-job

**A hard-working person does any job without complaint;
A lazy person is picky about the job he does.**

47. Nrog cov laus dab tsis hem;
Nrog cov nom luag tsis cem.

go with-those-old-ghosts-not-bother/frighten
go with-those-officials-others-not-scold/curse

**Go with elders, the ghosts don't bother you;
Go with officials, others don't curse you.**

48. Khiav nab ntsib qav;
Khiav dab ntsib tog-cav.

run-snake-meet-frog
run-ghost-meet-fallen log

**Run from the snake and meet a frog;
Run from a ghost and meet a fallen log.**

49. Tub-nkeeg yuav noj zaub qab;
Tub-nquag lam noj zaub hlab.

one-lazy-will-eat-vegetable-delicious
one-energetic-just-eat-vegetable-boiled

**A lazy man likes to eat delicious food;
An energetic man just eats plain vegetables.**

50. Muaj mob thiaj nrhiav tshuaj;
Muaj tuag thiaj nyiav-quaj.

have-sickness-then-look for-medicine
have-death-then-grieve-cry

**When there's sickness, look for medicine to put things right;
When there's death, there's grief and crying.**

51. Thaum siav tu ces luag tias tuag;
Thaum nyiaj tu ces luag tias pluag.

when-life-broken-then-others-say-dead
when-money-stop-then-others-say-poor

**When your breathing has stopped then they say you're dead;
When your money runs out then they say you're poor.**

52. Qoob tsis zoo tsuas plam nyog ib cim;
Poj-niam tsis zoo ces plam tas ib sim.

crop-not-good-only-lose-one-year
wife-not-good-then-lose-all-one-lifetime

**If the crops aren't good, you lose only one year;
If your wife isn't good, you lose a whole lifetime.**

53. Nom-tswv zoo ces hlub pej-xeem;
Nom-tswv tsis zoo ces hlub pej neem.

officials-good-then-love-population
officials-not good-then-love-to eat

**Officials that are good love their people;
Officials that are bad love to eat.**

54. Muaj yeej txawj pluag;
Tsis mob yeej txawj tuag.

rich-always-able-poor
not-sick-always-able-die

**The rich can always become poor;
The healthy can always die.**

55. Nyuj laug nyuj kub kawb
Nraug laug nraug suab hawb
Ntoo laus ntoo yoog kav
Neeg laus lawm los tseem xav xav.

cow-old-cow-horn-crooked
man-old-man-voice-creaky
tree-old-tree-many twigs
person-old-already-then-still-think-think

**Old cow, crooked horns;
Old man, creaky voice;
Old tree, many twigs;
Old person still has many ideas.**

56. Ntov ntoo saib ceg qhuav
Tuav-ncuav saib qab-nthab.

*chop-tree-watch-branch-dry
pound-sticky rice cake-watch-loft*

**When you chop the tree, look for dry branches overhead;
When you pound rice for rice cake, look out for the loft.**

57. Xav tau mam li hais
Txhais mam li cais.

*think-then-speak
translate-then-explain*

**Think before you speak
Translate before you explain.**

58. Cuaj pluag sib-nte,
Yim pluag sib-txig.

*nine-basket reeds-each other-same length
eight-basket reeds-each other-exactly equal*

**Nine basket reeds, all the same length
Eight basket reeds, exactly equal.**

(Treat people fairly.)

59. Qav muag ncauj;
Lus muag siab.

food-soft in-mouth
word-soft in-heart

**The mouth tastes food;
The heart tastes words.**

60. Luj tuag tu noob tshuav tug nyob qab-roob
Tsuag tuag tu tsav tshuav tug nyob qab-ha.

mongoose-dead-stop-ssed-leave-one-live-below-mountain
rat-dead-end-relatives-leave-one-live-below-valley

**Mongoose—dead to the last offspring, but one still lives below the
mountain;
Rat—every one killed, but one is left below the valley.**

61. Ib koog hav-zoov muaj ib tug ntoo ntev,
Ib cuab kwv-tij muaj ib tug ntse
Ib koog hav-zoov muaj ib tug ntoo loj,
Ib cuab kwv-tij muaj ib tug coj.

one-place-thick jungle-have-one-tree-long
one-group-cousins-have-one-smart
one-place-thick jungle-have-one-tree-big
one-group-cousins-have-one-lead

**In the thick jungle, there is one tree that is tallest;
In one group of cousins, there is one person who is smartest.
In the thick jungle, there is one tree that is bigger;
In one group of cousins, there is one person who is leader.**

62. Mloog niam txiv qhuab qhia thaum yau,
Loj hlob lo thiaj tau ua hau.

*listen-mother-father-advise-tell-when-young
big-grown-then-get-do-head*

**Listen to your parents' advice when you're young
When you're grown up, you'll be the village chief.**

63. Thaum tseem me xyaum tsim-txaj,
Loj thiaj ua tau neeg muaj-nyiaj.

*when-still-small-learn-practical/worthwhile
big-then-be able-person-have-silver*

**When young, learn to be practical,
When grown, able to be a wealthy person.**

64. Tus ntse yog luag
Tus ruam yog yus.

*one-smart-be-theirs
one-slow-be-raised*

**The smart one belongs to them
The slow one belongs to us.**

65. Koj qaib pw kuv cooj
Kuv os pw koj nkuaj.

*your-chicken-sleep-my-coop
my-duck-sleep-your-stable*

**Your chicken sleeps in my coop,
My duck sleeps in your stable.**

66. Tuaj kev nqaim rov kev dav.

come-way-narrow-return-way-wide

**Come (to the bride's house) on a narrow road;
Return home on a wide road.**

67. Kua-txob ntsim yov yuav ntsev daw,
Poj-niam phem yov yuav ncaws taw.

*chili pepper-hot-deserve-salt
wife-bad-deserve-kick-foot*

**Hot chili pepper calls for salt;
A bad wife calls for a kick of the foot.**

68. Niam-txiv piv tam lub ntuj;
Tub-ki piv tam lub teb.

*mother-father-compare-as-sky
children-compare-as-earth*

**Parents are like the sky;
Children are like the earth.**

69. Ua neej tsheej ib cuab vim yog mloog cov laus qhuab;
Ua neej tsheej ib yig vim yog mloog cov laus nplig.

*life-complete-one-household-because-be-listen-those-old-advise
life-complete-one-family-because-be-listen-those-old-counsel*

**In life your household is complete because you listened to the
elders' advice;
In life your family is complete because you listened to the elders'
counsel.**

70. Nkauj laus nkauj lees;
Hniav daj cuag hniav nees.

*girl-old-girl-knobby-veins
teeth-yellow-equal-teeth-horse*

**A girl too old has knobby veins;
Teeth yellow like a horse's teeth.**

71. Muaj tsis thov luag tias ua tub-sab;
Muaj npe tsis muaj tug luag tias yog dab.

*have something-not-ask-they-say- it's being a thief
have-name-not-have-a body-they-say that-it's a ghost.*

**If you have something you didn't ask them for, they call you a thief;
If it has a name with no body, they call it a ghost.**

72. Thaum tshuav luag nug tias tsis noj;
Thaum tag lawd ho ua dev yaim roj.

*when-a lot is left over-others-ask-(you) say-not-eat
when-gone-already-then-(you)-do like-dog-lick-fat*

**When there's a lot left over, they invite you to eat, but you don't eat;
When the food's all gone, you act like a dog licking fat.**

73. Kws ntaus phom txawj txua hneev;
Neeg dig-muag txawj luj teev.

*one-forge-gun-know how to-build-crossbow
person-blind-eye-know how to-weigh-using balance scale*

**A gunsmith knows how to build a crossbow;
A blind person knows how to weigh using a balance scale.**

74. Tub pluag tau tsiaj tuag;
Tub tshaib tau qav nchuav.

one-poor-get-animal-dead
one-hungry-get-food-spilled

**A poor man gets a dead animal;
A hungry man gets spilled food.**

75. Tsim tub ntsoj ces kawg ploj;
Tsim tub ntsuag ces kawg tuag.

torture-one-orphaned-then-finally-lost
torture-one-orphaned-then-finally-die

**Torture an orphan, he finally is lost
Persecute an orphan, he finally dies.**

76. Npaj tswv yim yuav yuav cov laus;
Npaj sib cav yuav-yuav cov ntse txaus.

prepare-idea-will-need-those-elders
prepare-each other-debate-will-need-those-smart-enough

**If you want ideas, you need the elders;
If you want a good debate, you need those who are smart enough.**

77. Tau poj-niam zoo ces npaum li tau pob nyiaj;
Tau poj-niam phem ces npaum li tau xyob-txhiaj.

get-wife-good-then-as much-like-get-bag-silver
get-wife-bad-then-as much-like-get-forced-trouble

**Get a good wife, it's like getting a bag of silver;
Get a bad wife, and you're forced into trouble.**

78. Yuav zoo ces zoo tus xub muaj;
Yuav ntsib ces ntsib tus xub tuaj.

will-good-then-good-one-first-have
will-meet-then-meet-one-first-come

**Prosperity comes to the one who is rich first;
Your mate is the one you meet first.**

79. Txhob tias muaj tsis txawj pluag;
Txhob tias mob tsis txawj tuag.

don't-say-rich-not-able-poor
don't-say-sick-not-able-die

**Don't mention wealth unless you're familiar with poverty;
Don't mention sickness unless you're familiar with death.**

PAIRED WORDS TXWV LUS

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| 1. | noj qab nyob zoo
<i>eat-delicious-live-well</i> | to be well-off; fine |
| 2. | cua daj cua dub
<i>wind-yellow-wind-black</i> | high wind, storm |
| 3. | tas hnuv tas hmo
<i>finish-day-finish-night</i> | all day and all night |
| 4. | tas siab tas ntsws
<i>end-heart-end-lungs</i> | very much |
| 5. | hais cuaj phab yim pheev
<i>speak-nine-sides-eight-ways</i> | speak of all kinds of things |
| 6. | lus nyiaj lus kub
<i>word-silver-word-gold</i> | valuable words, timely
advice |
| 7. | phem dab phem tuag
<i>bad-ghost-bad-death</i> | ugly |
| 8. | kev mob kev nkeeg
<i>way-sick-way-weak</i> | sickness |
| 9. | nyob dawb nyob huv
<i>live-white-live-clean</i> | freely |
| 10. | mob siab mob ntsws
<i>hurt-heart-hurt-lungs</i> | broken-hearted |
| 11. | kev ploj kev tuag
<i>way-lost-way-dead</i> | trouble and death |

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| 12. | kev plaub kev ntug
<i>way-litigation-way-dispute</i> | cases of justice, trouble
with litigation |
| 13. | kev quaj kev nyiav
<i>way-cry-way-keen/mourn</i> | sorrow, weeping, mourning |
| 14. | kev tshaib kev nqhis
<i>way-hunger-way-thirst</i> | hunger and thirst |
| 15. | me nas me noog
<i>small-mouse-small-bird</i> | birds and small animals |
| 16. | ntuj txias teb tsaus.
<i>sky-cold-land-dark</i> | place of the dead |
| 17. | ob pog peb yawg.
<i>two-grandmothers-three-grandfathers</i> | ancestors |
| 18. | zoo-nkauj zoo-nraug
<i>beautiful handsome</i> | attractive |
| 19. | quav dej quav cawv
<i>crave-water-crave-alcohol</i> | drunk |
| 20. | kawm txuj kawm ci
<i>study-information-study-enlighten</i> | educated; education |
| 21. | kawm txawj kawm ntse
<i>study-skill-study-sharp</i> | intelligent |
| 22. | kub teb kub taw
<i>hot-hand-hot-foot</i> | busy doing all sorts of
things |
| 23. | ntuj dub ntuj tib txig
<i>sky-black-sky-one-completely black</i> | heaven is black
(no one can tell the future) |
| 24. | ua tuv txias tom caj qwb.
<i>do-bedbug-bite-neck-back</i> | "stab me in the back" |

25. neeg txwj neeg laus **elder/very old person**
person-has seen many years-person-old
26. ntsej dub muag doog **furious**
ear-black-face-dark red
27. muaj koob nto npe **famous**
have-reputation-spread-name
28. chim laj chim xeeb **very unhappy**
unhappy-laj-unhappy-xeeb

'laj-xeeb' is a martial arts weapon used in a historical betrayal in China, that resulted in the Chinese persecution of the Hmong, and caused their movement to new lands....

as unhappy as in that terrible time, because of the 'lub laj-xeeb'

29. lus mos lus tuaj pos **soft words with a thorny intent**
word-soft-word-sprout-thorn
30. qee siab qee ntsws **willing to listen to both sides**
divide-heart-divide-lungs
31. noj dlawb noj dlo **eat for free**
eat-white-eat-without/empty
 (not required to work for your food)
32. zaj sawv **rainbow**
dragon-standing up
33. cev dub noj dub **eat only what is offered, no future obligation**
 cev dawb noj dawb
give-black-eat-black
give-white-eat-white

(this is usually said in situations where disputes are settled; there's a meal in settlement, and that's the end of the dispute)

SIMILES

1. zoo-nkauj cuag poj sua. **as pretty as a Chinese girl**
 pretty-equal-young woman-Chinese

2. zoo-nkauj cuag nkauj-zag. **as pretty as a dragon's**
 pretty-equal-girl-dragon **daughter**

3. zoo-nraug cuag nraug suav **as handsome as a young**
 handsome-equal-young man **Chinese man**
 -Chinese

4. zoo-nraug cuag nraug-zaj **as handsome as a dragon's**
 handsome-equal-young man **son**
 -dragon

5. loj cuag ntxhw **as big as an elephant**
 big-equal-elephant

6. me cuag dev mub **as small as a dog's flea**
 small-equal-dog's-flea

7. rog cuag las-npua **as fat as a castrated pig**
 fat-equal-castrated pig

8. nrawm cuag xob **as fast as lightning**
 fast-equal-lightning

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| 9. | khwv cuag suav qhev
<i>toil-equal-Chinese-slave</i> | work like a Chinese slave |
| 10. | ntse cuag riam
<i>sharp-equal-knife</i> | as sharp as a knife (smart) |
| 11. | ntshiab cuag dej
<i>clean/pure-equal-water</i> | as pure as water |
| 12. | phem cuag liab
<i>bad/ugly-equal-monkey</i> | as ugly as a monkey |
| 13. | dawb cuag txhuv
<i>white/clean-equal-hulled rice</i> | as clean as hulled rice |
| 14. | liab ploog cuag ntshav
<i>red-dark-equal-blood</i> | as dark red as blood |
| 15. | daj cuag txiv-tsawb
<i>yellow-equal-banana</i> | as yellow as a banana |
| 16. | dub cuag qhov rooj txos
<i>black-equal-opening-door-stove (fireplace)</i> | as black as the fireplace |
| 21. | nrawm cuag kauv
<i>fast-equal-deer</i> | as fast as a deer |
| 22. | nrawm cuag nkais
<i>fast-equal-mouse</i> | as fast as a mouse |

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| 23. | nrov cuag xob quaj
<i>loud-equal-thunder</i> | as loud as thunder |
| 24. | mos cuag tsawb
<i>soft-equal-banana</i> | as soft as banana |
| 25. | tawv cuag zeb
<i>hard-equal-rock</i> | as hard as rock |
| 26. | txias cuag dej
<i>cold-equal-water</i> | as cold as water |
| 27. | nrawm npaum li kauv
<i>fast-as much as-deer</i> | as fast as a deer |